



**Vince Ryan**  
**Harris County Attorney**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **County Attorney Vince Ryan Urges EPA to Require Complete Dioxin Removal from San Jacinto River Waste Pits**

Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan is urging the Environmental Protection Agency to require the complete removal of toxic dioxin wastes at a Superfund site on the San Jacinto River. Waste pits at the site contain a dangerous type of pollutant known as 2,3,7,8-TCDD dioxin, one of the most toxic pollutants in existence making fishing and recreation near the site unsafe.

County Attorney Ryan filed comments on behalf of Harris County and its residents in a letter to the EPA. The letter was released to the public today.

In 2008, at the urging of Harris County and others, the site, located in and on the banks of the San Jacinto River near the IH-10 East Bridge in east Harris County, was made a Superfund Site by the EPA. The pits were at one time used to store chemical by-products of paper production. Since that time, by order of the EPA, the responsible parties placed layers of rock and a plastic tarp over the location as a temporary solution to control the leakage.

The parties responsible for the pollution, International Paper, Inc. and MIMC (a subsidiary of Waste Management, Inc.), are proposing a scaled-down remediation plan that would leave toxic and hazardous materials in the environment by simply leaving the “cap” of rock and plastic where it is now.

In his letter, Ryan told the EPA that anything less than complete removal of the toxins would leave the site vulnerable to damage from hurricanes and other severe weather conditions that regularly impact the Texas Gulf Coast.

Despite efforts to educate the public of the contamination dangers, including posted warning signs, the area remains a popular place for fishing and family recreation.

“The Waste Pits are located in an area of the San Jacinto River that is the locale of boating, swimming, camping, commercial and recreational fishing,” County Attorney Ryan said. “Removal of the source material from the Waste Pits and the river sediment is the only way” to ensure that humans and wildlife are no longer exposed to 2,3,7,8-TCDD.



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The letter was filed at the invitation of the EPA for consideration by the National Remedy Review Board of the EPA. The Board will meet in July and will recommend to the EPA which remedy to use to clean up the site as well as recommend the amount of dioxin, if any, that can remain after the clean-up. Harris County is recommending complete remediation (the removal of substantially all of the dioxin waste). The EPA will take the recommendations of the Review Board as well as Harris County and the other interested parties into consideration before making a final determination regarding the future of the San Jacinto River waste pits.

In a completely separate proceeding, County Attorney Ryan is suing the responsible parties: International Paper Inc., MIMC and Waste Management, Inc. for polluting the San Jacinto River and seeking millions of dollars in civil penalties for the contamination. The case is pending in state district court and set for trial in late September 2014.

For more information on the EPA Superfund proceeding on the San Jacinto Waste Pits, see: [http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san\\_jacinto/](http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/san_jacinto/).

For more information on the Harris County water pollution suit against International Paper, Inc., MIMC and Waste Management, see <http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/cmpdocuments/caoimages/20140205SanJacintoWastePitsThirdAmendedPetition.pdf>.

For a copy of the letter filed with the EPA on behalf of Harris County and its residents, see: <http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/cmpdocuments/caoimages/NRRBLetter050114.pdf>.

# San Jacinto River Dioxin Pits Contamination Zone

